



MEMO



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Public Officials Train for Disasters

By Steve Powers, NCEM Area Coordinator

More than 60 Moore County municipal staff members and elected officials traveled to Emmitsburg, Md. in mid March for an Integrated Emergency Management course. Representatives from Alamance and Lee counties' emergency management agencies, Greensboro Fire Department, Sandhills Community College, state departments of Agriculture and Transportation and N.C. Emergency Management also participated in the class.

Conducted by FEMA at the Emergency Management Institute the four-day exercise-based training placed public officials and emergency personnel in a realistic disaster situation within the classroom. The course included a combination of lectures, discussions, small-group planning sessions and practical exercises that taught participants new concepts, increased their awareness and expanded their capabilities. For the exercise portion of the course, each participant was assigned a role similar to his/her real-life position. Exercise players were asked to respond with available personnel, maintain a coordinated response effort and start thinking about long term recovery for the community.

"The exercise scenario simulated a series of tornados in Moore County which spin off from a category 4 hurricane in Eastern North Carolina," said Scot Brooks, Emergency Manager for Moore County. "But it could just as easily have been a major hazardous materials incident, a widespread flu epidemic, or even a terrorist strike."

Brooks said the exercise scenario was designed to provide learning opportunities to push staff and the county's existing plans and procedures to their limits.



From left: Debra Ensminger, county planner, Scot Brooks Moore EM Director, and Katherine Liles of Aberdeen join other Moore County officials for a week of disaster training.

Disaster Assistance Work Group Responds to Mock Plane Crash

By Dianne Curtis, NCEM Eastern Branch Manager

The quiet Saturday morning was shattered when a Boeing 707 crashed in Windsor snapping the plane in half and plowing through houses before coming to rest in the Cashie River. It left a horrible path of casualties, fire, jet fuel and debris.

This was the scene that brought emergency managers and personnel from 13 northeastern counties together as the Disaster Assistance Work Group, or the DAWG. Members from Currituck, Camden, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Hertford, Gates, Bertie, Martin, Washington, Tyrrell, Hyde, Dare and Chowan counties pulled together for the NCEM-sponsored Robur A Vicinis exercise (Latin for strength in neighbors).

Established in 2009, the DAWG has pooled resources and plans to form its own comprehensive regional Emergency Response Plan and a regional

database. Members routinely assist each other during times of need through established mutual aid. Two very good examples of the DAWG in action were response to the flooding from Tropical Storm Nicole in September 2010, and the April 16, 2011 tornadoes in Bertie County. In both instances, surrounding emergency managers came to assist and sent much needed resources to Bertie, all with just a phone call.



“We understand that one person can’t do it all,” said Christy Saunders, EM director for Camden-Pasquotank. “Preplaced mutual aid lets us quickly help each other and bring what we can to help out.”

DAWG members came together March 25 for the Robur A Vicinis exercise as an Incident Management Team to help Bertie County respond to the plane crash. They took to the table years of local knowledge and experience, as well as additional county resources. Mitch Cooper, newly hired as Bertie County Emergency Manager, received a trial by fire with the scenario. But with



so many neighbors to help him, the scene was quickly under control.

The DAWG members organized themselves quickly into Incident Command Structure sections of command, safety, public information officer, liaison, operations, plans, logistics and finance. They produced an incident action plan while handling the plane crash scene and all the issues that came with it. NCEM Area 1 Coordinator Chris Gwin and Regional Response Team 1 Chief Jim Peele were on hand to assist with state resources and hazardous materials issues.

“Today was absolutely a success for the DAWG,” said Ann Keyes, EM director for Washington County. “We came together for this county and worked just as if it was our own.”

Upper photo: Christy Saunders, Justin Gibbs, Hyde EM and Chris Smith, Hertford County EM track resources and work on their Incident Action Plan logistics for Exercise Robur A Vicinis 2012.

Lower photo: Ann Keyes, Washington County EM, briefs Mitch Cooper, Bertie EM, and Mary Beth Newns, Currituck EM, on the status of logistics for the exercise.

New Area Code 984 for the Triangle

As of March 31, the new 984 area code will be available in the 919 area code region.

Ten-digit dialing will be necessary for local and expanded calls when dialing 919 or 984. This will impact NC Emergency Management facilities, National Guard facilities, residences, businesses and wireless cellular devices within the dialing area.

For more information, see
www.att.com/areacode.

EMPG Funding at Work in Wilson

By Julia Jarema, NCDPS Communications

Wilson County Emergency Management Director Gordon Deno believed he had made a good investment when his county used \$10,000 in Emergency Management Performance Grant funds to install the Code Red warning call system. Convincing his local leadership, however, took some additional effort.

He knew he was successful when the local planning director thanked him for the warning call that may have saved his life.

"Our planning director told me his first reaction was irritation when he received a phone call at 2 a.m. warning of an approaching tornado. But within five minutes he and his wife were downstairs seeking shelter as the storm blew through," Deno explained. "He stood up in front of the entire county management staff and told them that this was the best money we ever spent."

The Code Red alert system calls pre-designated phone numbers to tell Wilson County residents if there is a severe storm threatening their area. The geographical areas are very specific only warning those residents who are directly in the path of the storm.

The Wilson EM team was already researching the warning systems last spring but after the massive tornado outbreak, the team decided that the Code Red system was an investment they couldn't afford NOT to make.

Wilson County actually had two tornadoes last year. Following the first one, many of the residents asked about tornado sirens and encouraged the county to install them. County officials actually examined that option 15 years ago and calculated that it would take 63 sirens to cover the county adequately at a cost of \$12,000 each. But the \$750,000+ price tag proved too costly.

For less than the cost of one tornado siren, the county found a system that would not only provide storm alerts, but also could be used for other hazards such as hazmat, health or hostile action incidents. (That portion of the system is paid by the

county general fund. Only the weather warning is covered by EMPG funds.)

Deno purchased and installed the Code Red Weather Warning alert system for county residents in July 2011 using the federal EMPG funds. The cost was based on the number of county residents at that time. Others can continue to be added in years to come at no additional cost according to contract terms.

The county then promoted the system through a massive publicity campaign last summer, asking residents to self-register with their address and up to two phone numbers. While each registration is limited to two numbers, there is nothing that prevents county residents from registering more than once. Residents can register online in about two minutes.

So far, more than 8,000 numbers have been implemented in the system. The county's population is 81,000.

Weather alerts are sent automatically using a synchronized system with NOAA and the National Weather Service. Average warning time is 30 seconds after the announcement from NOAA.

Deno said one of the benefits of the Code Red system is its flexibility. For instance, the county health department can use the system to make calls to their contact lists, including the strategic national stockpile contacts. Also, the system works for the hard of hearing community. Deaf residents can choose to receive warnings via NC Relay, type, email or text.

"We've already seen a tremendous return on the investment," Deno explained. "There are other similar products available, but this seemed to be the best fit for us."

Deno said the only complaint has been from a gentleman who did not receive a storm warning. When he looked into it, he discovered the man was not called because he was not in the storm path. There was no reason for him to be concerned.

Review of 2012 NCEMA Spring All-Hazards Conference

By Gary Jones, NCEMA Executive Director

Nearly 300 people attended the annual NC Emergency Management Association Spring All-Hazards Conference in mid March. Department of Public Safety Secretary Reuben Young welcomed participants and thanked them for their continuing service.

Conference presentations focused upon a wide range of subjects including: the limits of local authorities under a declared state of emergency; how the Americans with Disabilities Act affects disaster response; and the challenges faced by state and local emergency management during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and Minneapolis bridge collapse.

Other sessions focused on both the pros and cons of technology; smart phone applications for emergency management; and what to do when technology fails. Participants also heard about concept of operations for providing meals during a large scale disaster event; how the UNC campuses are preparing for critical incidents; and how emergency management, National Weather Service and media are working together to provide consistent information about weather impacts.

Those who are new to field were able to take advantage of several specifically designed classes for emergency management novices including: day-to-day budgeting issues, budget issues in declared disasters, basics of crisis communication and media relations, an overview emergency management laws, and the importance of detailed record keeping during disaster response and recovery.

State and county emergency management staff that work with the radiological emergency preparedness program met to discuss common issues and solutions. Also, approximately 70 local elected officials participated in a workshop to better acquaint them with emergency management principles and their role in disaster response and recovery. Photos and presentations from the conference are posted on the NCEMA web site <https://ncema.renci.org/SpringConf2012/default.aspx>.

Mollie Grant Receives Special Recognition

By Gary Jones, NCEMA Executive Director

State Emergency Management Director Doug Hoell thanked and recognized Mollie Grant for her years of dedicated service as one of the first Native American females working in emergency management.

Hoell presented Grant a certificate of acknowledgement, recognizing her as a tremendous public servant for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and an exemplary role model for all those with whom she works.



Grant, who is the emergency management coordinator for the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, was recently inducted into the International Network of Women in Emergency Management Hall of Fame. The honor came as part of the International Association of Emergency Manager's 59th Annual Conference last November. As a recipient she was chosen for her outstanding achievements and significant contributions in the field of homeland security and emergency management; as a professional who has devoted her career to women's and girls' causes and community endeavors; and as a inspiration to young women envisioning careers in homeland security and emergency management.

Mobile Disaster Hospital Provides Critical Training for N.C. Responders

From DHHS News Release

North Carolina emergency medical response teams and volunteers trained together in western North Carolina in late March in the set up and use of a unique mobile hospital that would provide surge capacity to meet critical care needs in a community struck by a disaster.

The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is hosting the event at the Western North Carolina Agriculture Center on Tuesday and Wednesday to support training for trauma surgeons from UNC Hospitals, logistical support crews from North Carolina Baptist Men Disaster Relief and members of the State Medical Response System, which includes the State Medical Assistance Teams (SMAT).

“This is a great opportunity for our partners to see and experience the National Mobile Disaster Hospital equipment set up in a configuration they are likely to experience if it were deployed,” said Tom Mitchell, assistant chief of the DHHS Office of Emergency Medical Services.

The federally-owned mobile hospital is available to provide scalable hospital services to a community whose own hospital is either overwhelmed by a disaster or damaged and needs assistance to continue operations while repairs are made. The goals of the training exercise are: keep volunteer units familiar with setup and operation of the hospital elements, most of which were assembled that day; and develop a training regimen that would quickly familiarize trauma surgeons in states where the resources may be deployed – practically anywhere in the U.S., with a focus on the Southeast due to hurricane vulnerability.

Training equipment set up at the Western North Carolina Agriculture Center included two of the state’s four mobile surgery units, as well as a major emergency department, critical care holding area, full digital X-ray unit, a laboratory and blood bank.

“For this to be a viable, portable critical care unit, the hospital relies on the host state to provide the medical staff to operate it,” said Lew Stringer, a



Above: The federally-owned mobile hospital augments local services in large disasters. (photo: Mark Stepp) Below: The facility includes surgery units, emergency department, an x-ray unit, laboratory and blood bank.

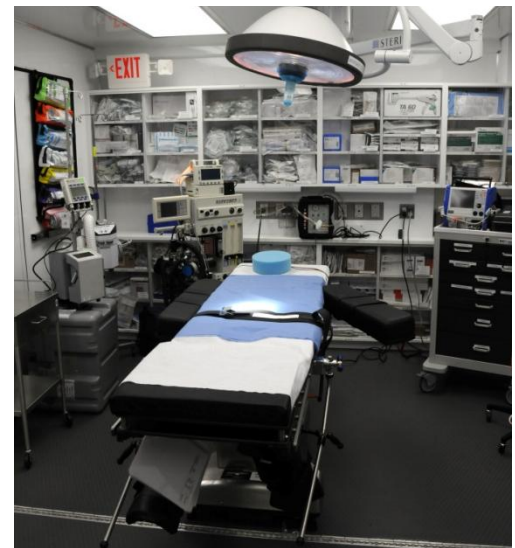
physician and project manager for the National Mobile Disaster Hospital.

“We want people to know where to find things, and how

the operating room and emergency department supply areas are set up. We want the North Carolina Baptist Men Disaster Relief teams to stay familiar with how to set up the large shelters we use in our various configurations.”

Activities include training in avoidance of blood borne pathogens, proper use of fire extinguishers, and development of the just-in-time training for trauma surgeons and nurses. Wednesday, the equipment will be re-packed and returned in 13 tractor trailers to a storage location in the western part of the state.

The National Mobile Disaster Hospital is a federally owned asset that is maintained by the N.C. Office of Emergency Medical Services, part of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services.



Building a Weather Ready Nation

From information provided by NOAA

NOAA's Weather-Ready Nation is about building community resilience in the face of increasing vulnerability to extreme weather and water events.

Record-breaking snowfall, cold temperatures, extended drought, high heat, severe flooding, violent tornadoes, and hurricanes have all combined to reach the greatest number of multi-billion dollar weather disasters in the nation's history.

The devastating impacts of extreme events can be reduced through improved readiness, which is why the Weather-Ready Nation initiative is so important. Through substantial operational initiatives focused on demand-driven support services and supported by innovative technology and strategic training of our workforce, NOAA's National Weather Service is transforming its operations to better help America respond. In the end, emergency managers, first responders, government officials, businesses and the public will be empowered to make fast and smart decisions to save lives and livelihoods.

The Vision

The vision to build a Weather-Ready Nation is defined in NOAA National Weather Service's Strategic Plan. And, like any effective vision, it is accompanied by specific and tangible actions. As outlined in the NWS Roadmap to a Weather-Ready Nation, the myriad actions taken internally and with partners will translate the Strategic Plan into real-life actions that save lives and livelihoods. In addition to saving lives and livelihoods, the goals of the Strategic Plan include improvements in a wide range of areas to support management of the nation's water supply, and in understanding of climate-related risks, economic productivity, healthy communities and ecosystems.

The Action

Accomplishing these goals means important changes for NOAA. The agency is not just improving the precision of forecasts and warnings; they are communicating that risk more effectively through the integration of social and behavioral sciences research. Building on past successes in decision support services, the National Weather Service is launching community-based pilot

projects across the country, ranging in focus from emergency response to integrated environmental services, to enhance the nation's preparedness. NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research and National environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service are moving new science and technology into weather service operations that will improve forecasts, increase lead time and ultimately increase weather-readiness. The nationwide implementation of Dual Polarization radar technology, the Hurricane Forecast Improvement Program (HFIP), a new National Water Center and Integrated Water Resources Science and Services, and the Joint Polar Satellite System are several upgrades already underway.

The Dialogue

Building a Weather-Ready Nation starts with these internal actions, but requires the participation and commitment of a vast nationwide network of partners including other government agencies and emergency managers, researchers, the media, insurance industry, non-profits, the private sector, the Weather Enterprise and more. The national dialog engages stakeholders in assessing why the nation is experiencing such extreme impacts. The goal of the dialog is to support the mission of the National Weather Service by reducing risk and increasing community resilience for future extreme events.

Through a series of symposiums, participants will identify, prioritize, and set in motion actions to improve the nation's resiliency against severe weather.

The Future

All of these actions fall under the umbrella of Weather-Ready Nation. And all support the same end goal: better information for better decisions. Imagine some of the scenarios that will be possible in a Weather-Ready Nation...

- When a mother in Oklahoma hears a tornado warning, she understands that she should go to the basement now, not in a half hour.
- When a hurricane strikes in Louisiana, emergency managers will have a new level of support from emergency response specialists.
- Forecasts will focus on impacts. For example, "two inches of snow an hour" may

become “roads will be impassable due to heavy snowfall during rush hour.”

- Environmental forecasts will help people manage chronic respiratory illnesses such as asthma.

Ultimately, a Weather-Ready Nation is one of people empowered to make life-saving decisions that also prevent devastating economic losses. It's all of us working together to become a nation known for its resiliency in the face of deadly weather and water events.

CAP Holds Search and Rescue Exercise at Eno River

By Andy Wiggs, CAP

Members of North Carolina Wing, Civil Air Patrol participated with other agencies in a mock missing persons search on February 25 at the Eno River State Park. Sponsored by the Central North Carolina Search Team, the exercise provided members an opportunity to test their communications and rescue skills.

Right: Civil Air Patrol members search for a missing person during a training exercise at the Eno River State Park.

Eighteen members formed three CAP search teams and one communications team to find the three missing subjects. Teams searched inside the northern part of the park looking for clues. Two teams assisted a hasty search team from CNCSAR to stabilize, package and evacuate one subject across rough terrain. The communications team provided clear message traffic from incident command to the CAP and other agency search teams and two dog teams in the field. This also tested CAP interoperability with outside agencies using federal assigned channels. The exercise also allowed practice for CAP members to utilize their Search and Rescue Tech 2 training gained last fall.



Aid Available for Tornado Survivors in Cherokee

By Julia Jarema, NCDPS Communications

Gov. Bev Perdue requested and received a disaster declaration by the U.S. Small Business Administration for Cherokee County soon after tornadoes swept through the mountain county March 2. The county received a state disaster declaration at the same time

“We are extremely fortunate there were no life-threatening injuries from these tornadoes,” Perdue said. “But many of these families and business owners in Cherokee County need help to repair their homes and begin rebuilding their lives. Homeowners and renters who suffered damages from the severe weather can apply for low-interest loans or grants.”

Officials from North Carolina Emergency Management and the U.S. SBA operated a Disaster Loan Outreach Center March 13-22 in Murphy to help individuals complete their applications, answer questions about the disaster loan program and explain the application process. Approximately 50 people visited the center to register for help.

Severe storms and tornadoes rolled across several western counties March 2-3, damaging more than 150 homes in Cherokee, Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties. All three counties declared a local state of emergency the evening of the storms. Damage assessment teams from North Carolina Emergency Management and the SBA helped local officials survey the damage March 5-7. Those assessments in Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties did not meet the threshold for a SBA disaster declaration since many of the homes were insured.

For a county to qualify, at least 25 homes and/or businesses that sustained major damage or were destroyed do not have adequate insurance to cover the losses. Fifty homes and businesses in Cherokee County with inadequate insurance had major damage or were destroyed. Mecklenburg had nine homes that fit that category; Cabarrus had five.

Loans up to \$200,000 are available through the SBA to homeowners to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate. Homeowners and renters also are eligible for loans up to \$40,000 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed personal property.

Storm victims in Cherokee County who do not qualify for a federal loan may be eligible for a state grant of up to a maximum of \$25,000 to help pay for housing and other essential needs. The state grants will be made available as a result of the governor's disaster declaration for Cherokee County.

Interest rates are as low as 2.063 percent for homeowners and renters with terms up to 30 years. Loan amounts and terms are set by the SBA and are based on each applicant's financial condition.

Individuals and businesses who were unable to visit the center can apply via the SBA Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955 (800-877-8339 for the deaf and hard-of-hearing) or <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/>.

One of the Cherokee County homes damaged by the early March tornadoes.



Deadline Nears for Those in FEMA Houses in Flood Zones

After Hurricane Irene struck last August, thousands of families were left temporarily homeless. Most have been able to repair and return to their homes, but for some, housing challenges remain.

While about half of the original occupants have already moved out, 106 families are still living in the mobile homes that the Federal Emergency Management Agency provided as a last-resort option. April 1 is the deadline for those who have been using the temporary housing units in Special Flood Hazard Areas. The remaining occupants have applied for and been granted a 30-day extension.

“There was no easy housing solution in many of the areas hit hardest by Irene,” explained state Emergency Management Director Doug Hoell. “The use of FEMA mobile homes proved to be the most workable solution for many families, but we knew it was only a short-term answer for those in flood-prone areas.”

Initially, the FEMA manufactured houses were not a viable option for the low-lying areas of eastern North Carolina due to the potential for future flooding. Last fall, affected counties, the state and FEMA developed a compromise to enable the FEMA homes to be placed in the flood plain. In turn, occupants agreed to be out of the units by April, before spring flooding and hurricanes set in.

“We have been working diligently to help survivors find safer, permanent housing. Volatile spring weather can cause flooding and strong winds that can easily damage manufactured homes,” said Hoell. “Spring storms are already sweeping the nation, and we remain concerned about the families that remain in the flood zone.”

Outreach teams from North Carolina Emergency Management and FEMA have been meeting regularly since last fall with each of the 194 families who were assigned a FEMA temporary housing unit. Counselors have met weekly with occupants to help them explore or develop plans for safe, secure and functional housing. Already, 90 families have moved back into permanent homes.

Help is available to those who need more time to complete home repairs. Occupants can formally request that their county flood manager issue a variance and 30-day extension so they can remain in the FEMA unit while they work on their permanent home.

“Counties helped us identify and give variances to those who may need more time,” said Michael Bolch, FEMA’s federal coordinating officer. “We have seen good progress among those who are able to move, and we remain grateful to the volunteer agencies that are helping survivors with their home repairs.”

The manufactured housing units were part of a larger state and FEMA temporary housing program that included hotels, motels, apartments and other available rental properties to house eligible residents displaced by Hurricane Irene. FEMA and NCEM have provided \$29 million in housing assistance to help 8,900 survivors repair and rebuild their damaged homes after Irene.

The housing program is not ending. This deadline only applies to those temporary housing units located in the state’s Special Flood Hazard Areas.

Staffing Changes

John Yarboro – who has led the Homeland Security Branch for the past six years, retires effective April 1.

Robert Boyd – will join NCEM as a new planner in the Plans Section, effective April 2.

Mitch Cooper – became Bertie County’s new emergency management director March 12. The Bertie County native received his degree in emergency medical science from Wake Tech and has years of experience in the fire service.

My Cadet Experience

By Justin Gaddy, CAP Cadet Tech Sergeant

I have been a cadet in Civil Air Patrol for nearly a year and let’s just say it has been amazing.



My first activity was an emergency services weekend at Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania. It showed me my strengths and my weaknesses. It was so much fun. It pushed me to my limits. Then my next activity was my favorite so far. It was my basic encampment. It was the most thrilling experience I ever had. It was very hard but it was fun and serious.

There was no time that you could cut up.

My next activity was something unexpected that you probably heard about, Hurricane Irene. During Hurricane I served as a mission staff assistant and mission radio operator; positions I have continued to enjoy.

I then attended the N.C. Ranger weekend at Camp Butner, N.C. and, like every emergency services event, it was very intense. Next, I attended a search and rescue tech 2 course. The SAR tech 2 course is a nationwide title that allows you to search with any search and rescue team in the country. I also attended the Hawk Mountain Ranger winter school in Pennsylvania where I was the communication officer assistant. Cadet Second Lieutenant Alesha North was the officer in charge of me and helped me learn so much. On March 30, I will be going to Medoc State Park for another emergency services event.

Justin is a 7th grade student at Turrentine Middle School in Burlington. He is one of 714 youth who participate in the North Carolina Civil Air Patrol Cadet program.